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ABSTRACT

Aspects of the relationships between state college and university representatives and state coordinating councils, and forms of intragroup behavior are considered. It is suggested that within an interorganizational paradigm, knowledge of and ability in interagency coordination may be crucial to the future of higher education. Higher education is likely to face changes in organizational functioning brought about through mandates of pressures generated by the various power sources in their respective states. The institution must identify a person to represent the organization, and the situation of sending representatives to an intergroup transaction between institution and state government results in the establishment of different kinds of relationships. Attention is directed to the interaction between the institution's representative(s) and other persons or groups in the institution and the relationships between institution members. Institutional representatives may expect their efforts and accomplishments to be denigrated and misunderstood by those whom they represent. The distrust of one's representatives may be indicative of the multistep process of information boundary planning. The interaction among and between institution members when group representatives are absent may be influenced by three kinds of basic assumption group activity proposed by Bion (1961): dependence, fight-flight, and pairing. It is suggested that institutions can support and encourage representatives in recognizing and understanding the role that boundaries play in the life of all groups and the problems of boundary crossing that develop when one group interacts with another. Institutions can also seek ways of helping membership retain a sense of the primary mission of the institution. (SW)

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PERSONAL DIMENSIONS OF INCREASING STATE INFLUENCE

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Increasingly, control and influence of the internal processes of an institution will be the subject of discussion between institutional representatives and state coordinating councils. Aspects of the relationship between institutional representatives and constituents and forms of intra-group behavior of constituents are discussed. Several recommendations for dealing with the inter-group paradigm between representatives and constituents are presented.

PERSONAL DIMENSIONS OF INCREASING STATE INFLUENCE

How will increasing state controls affect colleges and universities? Generally, in the realm of American higher education, interventions by legislators and boards of regents are feared by administrators and faculty alike (2). Yet, administrators and faculty face a changing environment that increasingly involves external intervention, restrictions in financial resources, and other factors outside their control. The relationships between state colleges and universities and government bureaucracies approximate the concept of mandated interorganization relations described by Raelin (16). The mandate is an expression of an interorganizational decision shaped by either a personal effort on the part of a set of organizations interested in mutual advancement or by institutional effort imposed on a set of organizations by the larger society (p. 58). The mandate established by state government reflects increasing interest in coordinating a state's higher education resources to maximize the educational opportunities for state residents. As a result, coordination, centralization, and a division of labor in higher education will receive continued emphasis (8).

In his study of the relationship between Washington State University and the Washington State Legislature, Frey (8) concluded that the legislature was moving closer to defining the parameters of strategic decision-making within the University. According to Frey, the tempo and the intensity of the histor-

ical interaction between these two organizations, the university and the legislature, may be expected to increase. This prediction, if realized on a general scale, has implications for the behavior of institutional representatives. Within an interorganizational paradigm, knowledge of and ability in interagency coordination may be more crucial to the future of higher education than the ability to relate to individuals. Frey predicts that in the future, important factors of power and resource control will reside to an ever-greater degree in the efficacy of organizations rather than in the actions of a few omnipotent individuals.

This scenario suggests that increasingly, control and influence of the internal processes of an institution will be the subject of negotiation or discussion between representatives of the institution and a state's coordinating council. In other words, the state government and the institution will contest what Thompson (22) calls the organizational domain, the specifications and understandings about what the educational organization will and will not do. It provides, although imperfectly, an image of an organization's role in a larger system which in turn serves us as a guide for the ordering of action in certain directions and not in others (22, p. 22). In this case, the larger system refers to the state system of colleges and universities of which a particular institution is a member.

By definition, according to Rice (17), a transaction between an enterprise and its environment must take place across the boundary of the enterprise. This transactional task system requires that persons "represent" their constituency in the two-way interaction between institution and state personnel. Thus, some persons in the institution will be vested with roles to carry on the continuing discussion and negotiation with representatives of the state. Reciprocally, one may also expect states to expand their repertory of formal mechanisms for carrying out a coordinating role with state colleges and universities. In New York State, for example, a prominent leader in the state legislature recently requested that the legislature create a commission on the future of higher education in the state. Citing declining enrollments and rising costs as precipitating factors, the state senator said that from the government's perspective, the state institutions were not managing very well to cope with the needed changes. The implication behind the call for yet another commission, is that the state government may become even more intrusive in its dealings with the state's colleges and universities.

The intensity of the interaction between the two organizations is heightened due to the power imbalance between them. State government, controlling as it does the supply and distribution of resources in the state, clearly has a position of power. On the other hand the college or university is

clearly dependent on the state for the supply of needed resources. Research by Bacharach and Lawler (1) indicates that one's perception of power is influenced by the outcome options available and the value attached to these outcomes. Where one views self as having few options, yet places a high value on desired outcomes, then power attributed to the other party in a conflict situation increases. College and university personnel increasingly find themselves in this position. As retrenchment in higher education increases the available options for institutional leaders and their staff decline. Also, as state governments exert increasing control over institutional policies and practices, the institution becomes more dependent on the state. In short, the institution loses power, both real and perceived, and the state gains power.

In the scenario projected for higher education, members of many colleges and universities will face changes in organizational functioning brought about through mandates or pressures generated by the various power sources in their respective state. One may expect conflict between the way the institution defines its primary task and the way in which the superordinate system, that is, the coordinating council or other state power sources, defines it. This contesting of the institution's mission, or organizational density in Frey's terms, constitutes the foci of the interaction between the two organizations.

UNDERSTANDING THE INTERACTION

In the simplest case of transactions between university and state representatives new dimensions of relationships are established. One is the relationship between the members of the institution and the person or persons who "represent" them. A second is that between the institution's representatives and members of the state's coordinating councils. Consideration of inter-group transactions suggest that relationships within a group "receiving" a representative and within the group "sending" the representative are important (14). In this case, relationships within the state coordinating council with the addition of the representatives of the institution and relationships within the institution with the "loss" of the institutional representatives to the state council, are important products of this inter-group activity.

How might one project some of the possible consequences of sustained and intensified inter-group activity between colleges and universities and their respective state coordinating boards? The group relations training approach, commonly known as the Tavistock model, may be used to understand elements of inter-group activity. The term "Tavistock Model" refers to a heuristic framework for identifying and understanding what conscious and unconscious processes take place within and between groups of people (11). This framework provides some understanding of the parameters that characterize the behavior of people in groups and the interaction of those groups.

Each member of a group inhabits three realms of reality (5). First, one inhabits a private world of thought and dreams. Second, one inhabits a world that is shared by the others, conceived of in terms of time and space about which a good deal of agreement can be reached. And third, one inhabits a world of shared creations of the mind, fantasies, attitudes, values, assumptions, and misgivings, that by virtue of being "held in common" have a great influence on the life of group members. According to Gosling (5), persons in groups resist change and cling to the status quo because of a reluctance to give up a relationship and suffer the pain of the loss. Secondly, persons resist change because of a fear of the unknown. And third, persons resist change to forestall a process of transition by which omnipotence is partially given up in favor of acknowledging a shared world of objective reality.

INTERGROUP RELATIONSHIPS

The institution, as one party in an interorganizational network, must identify a person or persons to represent the organization. This situation of having a group, in this case the institution, send representatives to what is essentially an inter-group transaction between institution and state government, results in the establishment of different kinds of relationships. In the present paper, I propose to limit the discussion to the consideration of two relationships.

The first concerns the interaction between the institution's representative(s) and other persons or groups in the institution and the second concerns relationships between institution members.

Webster's defines a plenipotentiary as a person invested with full power to transact any business. In this role, a representative is sent out with flexible terms of reference to do the best one can in the light of known views or known policies of the sending group. One may be given limits beyond which one cannot go but within these terms of reference a plenipotentiary may commit the group to a view or a course of course (17).

This role differs substantially from that of a delegate, a representative sent out by a group to deliver a message, express a given point, or take a given action on behalf of the group the delegate represents, but without sanction to vary the behavior taken in behalf of the group. To expedite the work of negotiating for the institution, the representative will, in all likelihood, be assigned the role of plenipotentiary. Of course, adoption of this role involves interpretation, decision-making, and contracting in behalf of the institution, activities which, although completed in behalf of the institution's membership, are the basis for mistrust of the representatives.

The tendency for most human beings to split the good from the bad in themselves and to project their resultant feelings

onto others is one of the major barriers to the understanding and control of the relationships between human resources and the tasks to which they contribute (14). In this case of inter-group representation, institutional representatives may expect their efforts and accomplishments to be denigrated and misunderstood by those whom they represent. Representatives may also experience the uncomfortable ordeal of being disowned by various groups of their constituents because representatives are suspected of transferring their allegiances from the institution to the other party in the interaction, in this instance the state coordinating agency. One may expect that the phenomena of distrust of the work or the motives of institutional representatives by institution members will exist independent of, though certainly tempered by, the nature of the issue currently under consideration.

This distrust of one's representatives may be indicative of the multistep process of informational boundary spanning. Furthermore, ambiguity in the organization over the confounding of informational and representational communication roles may contribute to role confusion and expectation. One report (23) found that perceived work-related competence and formal status were important determinants of successful boundary spanning. The results suggest that boundary-spanning individuals with internal and external expertise may be influential in both technical as well as administrative decision-

making. This linkage between organization needs and external information sources is an informal process in which individuals only approach those whom they see as technically competent and who have well-developed linkages to specific external areas. Demonstrated competence by the boundary spanner leads to an increase in influence in the organization. In a study of purchasing agents (21) the author concluded that as long as the agent is perceived to effectively filter and channel environmental information that is crucial, the scope of agent power may extend to product design, long-range planning and other traditional non-purchasing areas. In a similar fashion, institutional representatives to state government function as boundary-spanning individuals linking the institution to critical aspects of its external environment. As plenipotentiaries for the institution they perform an especially vital function for the dependent organization.

INTRA-ORGANIZATION RELATIONS

The second relationship of interest in this discussion concerns the interaction among and between institution members when group representatives are absent. The separation or exclusion of representatives may combine the principles of physics and philosophy. Representatives may be physically absent from the campus or they may be perceived as being metaphysically separate, that is, holding views or convictions that are out of tune with the cacophony of the campus.

The relationship between institution members may be influenced by "basic assumption" factors mentioned by Bion (4). The description or statement of the basic assumption gives meaning to group activity when a group is not functioning in a realistic and rational manner to accomplish the real task of the group. The basic assumption serves as a means of describing, categorizing, and understanding group functioning. Bion called the three kinds of basic assumption group activity, dependence, fight-flight, and pairing.

Some groups may evidence characteristics of each of the basic assumption activities depending upon the interaction between personal attributes and particular institutional conditions. For instance, some groups may assume a dependency position, looking to their leader for insight, answers, and action. When the leader fails to deliver, as all must at some time, the group will abandon the fallen helmsman and look for another to assume the role. Institutional representatives can, with certainty, predict that some part of their constituency will expect their representatives to solve all problems and handle the complex issues, yet explain them in clear, concise, but simple language. Although the membership of those assuming a dependent stance vis-a-vis the representatives will change, one may expect that in most institutions one may readily find someone or some group that has assumed the particular basic assumption behavior of dependency.

Bion's second basic assumption group is fight-flight. He joins these together as two sides of the same phenomena. The assumption is that the group meets together to preserve itself and that may best be done by fighting or fleeing from something or someone. Work units or other groups in the institution operating under a fight-flight assumption may be expected to actively obstruct representatives or contest their work. The group may demand that representatives lead them in attacking a foe, most likely the state representing as it does a basic threat to institutional health and prosperity. Alternatively, institution members may also evidence a flight or avoidance pattern. In various ways, missing meetings, delaying information gathering, avoiding decisions, overlooking deadlines, engaging in irrelevant chitchat during meetings or ducking difficult questions, members may engage in innumerable activities to circumvent the task of carrying out required duties. In other words, representatives may find themselves representing an elusive constituency.

In the third basic-assumption behavior of pairing, group members live in an atmosphere of hopefulness. Emphasis is placed on the future where answers are available, problems are solved, and the good life abounds. In this pattern of behavior, members are so sure that Utopia is just around the corner, that they engage in little but hope-filled waiting. Members enjoy this state of heightened optimism and their hope-

ful expectation often finds voice in cliches about why the future will be different and better. Should the representative attempt to introduce some reality-testing, or engage in activities that call into question the group's rosy picture of the future, one may expect group members to lash out in retaliation.

Although each basic assumption differs from the other two, they have characteristics in common. Basic assumption life is not oriented outward toward reality, but inward toward fantasy, which is then compulsively and uncritically acted out (20). Basic assumption activity usually does not exist in pure form for an extended time period, rather one expects to find persons and groups shifting between one basic assumption to another, as well as evidencing mature, rational, work-related behavior in their institutional roles. Generally, one may view basic assumption activity as a form of interference with tasks that are to be done. In addition, institutional representatives may find that basic assumption activities influence their actions as readily as these phenomena touch the lives of their constituents. Representatives may collude with constituent groups to act out basic assumption life. Consequently, work tasks related to institutional membership and institutional representation may suffer to the extent that participants in the basic assumption are unable or unwilling to recognize the existence of basic assumption activity and to use it in pursuit of task completion.

Results of a laboratory simulation of negotiation (9) support the value of trust and communication between constituencies and their representatives. When distrusted negotiators were faced by an exploitive opponent, they tended to resist the demands of their constituencies while acquiescing to their opponent. When trusted negotiators were confronted by a cooperative opponent they were more conciliatory toward their constituency and were better able to resist their opponent. Appropriate control and use of basic assumption activity serves the interests of both constituents and representatives.

According to Frey, faculty and other professional staff will increasingly be called on to participate in what he calls an organizational model of the university. He implies that institutions and their members will find an increase in the use of data to make decisions, a reliance on organizational units and other formally organized groups in the institution, and delegation to group, unit, or institutional representatives to administer the fortunes of the institution. One may expect various groups, representing a particular function in the institution, a set of related functions, or an aggregate of individuals, for example, members of an academic discipline or department, to compete for attention, and funding, within the boundaries of the institution. Coincidentally, the power of individuals to influence the destiny of the institution will, in all likelihood, diminish. The turmoil and resistance resulting from these changes can be better understood if they are seen as unconsciously motivated attempts by people clinging

to existing institutions because changes in social relationships threaten existing social defenses against deep and intense anxieties (10). Under these conditions, where individuals bond together in groups, formal or otherwise, to accomplish specific tasks or objectives, one may expect a corresponding increase in basic assumption activity as well as other forms of maladaptive behavior.

USING BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

For effective functioning the basic assumptions must be subservient to and used in the service of the work task (20). The representative, working with people's needs, fantasies, and aspirations, may experience a predicament similar to that encountered by the architect-planner. Bexton (3) describes how the architect is often involved in making decisions that appear rational but turned out to be incredibly dysfunctional and irrational when viewed from outside the organization. According to Bexton, two causal factors associated with such outcomes are the existence of basic assumption life activity and the covert politics of the organization, both of which the architect can neither avoid nor control. An important requirement for the architect, as it is for institutional representatives, is to make positive use of basic assumption activity. If basic assumption activity is recognized then one may choose actions that use the basic assumption in a creative manner or, at the very least, take action that does not exacer-

bate the situation.

Richardson (19) describes how a teacher, in dealing with a class that has made the dependency assumption, must contrive to be reliable while continually urging the class to question his omniscience, challenge his opinions and realistically accept his human limitations. If the group has assumed a fight-flight stance, the role of the teacher is to channel the aggression into an attack on ignorance and apathy, so that the class rediscovers its powers of cooperation in a learning situation and uses its leaders in a constructive way.

In much the same manner as the teacher, institutional representatives must be sensitive to the clues that signify basic assumption activity. Once noted however, the representative must have the conviction and the courage to take appropriate action. Rice (18) acknowledges that university management that sets out to define and control boundaries and to administer effectively, tends to be denigrated and to be accused of serving some political power group or other. The job is difficult, according to Rice, because effective task performance demands that judgments be made about the quality of the contribution of members of task systems, and that the judgments be acted on. The representative, serving the membership and the institution by assuming a leadership role, has both a difficult and important task to perform.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

First, institutions can support and encourage representatives in recognizing and understanding the role which boundaries play in the life of all groups and the problems of boundary crossing which develop when one group interacts with another. Menninger (12) describes how participation by organization members in group relations conferences has provided the Menninger Clinic a kind of "observing ego", a new perspective and a new conceptual framework for grappling with the inevitable problems of organizational life. He relates a specific outcome for participants was the awareness of a powerful tendency of members of groups to use individuals both inside and outside the group as targets or depositories for unacceptable feelings and attitudes. This realization that scapegoating always involves projection would seem to be of particular use for institutional representatives who are likely to be prime targets for such projection by institution members.

Second, institutions can support experimentation designed to find ways of helping institutional membership retain a sense of the primary mission of the institution. Lawrence (11) describes this perspective as that of each role-holder not only concerned with the management of self in one's role but also holding the management of the total group "in the mind." According to Lawrence, this "in the mind" context means that the individual in his role holds a Gestalt of the system as

a whole with which one relates one's role, and that one locates one's own work group as a system with the other systems of the organization. The identification of operational organizational goals is, at best, difficult. The fact that the representative must operate at a distance from the parent organization may be doubly handicapping, as distance adds to the inherent ambiguity in goal definition (15). Perhaps various forms of formally organized discourse within the institution, meetings, conferences, discussions, and other means of communication between members and representatives may aid the institution and its membership to achieve a sense of shared purpose.

Third, institutions may create an organizational structure designed to assist their institutional representatives. Assistance may take the form of technical help to gather, analyze, or disseminate information, providing emotional support for representatives, or consultation to aid them in the testing of social reality.

Menzies (13) proposes that success and vitality of a social institution is connected to the techniques used to contain anxiety and that an understanding of this aspect of the functioning of a social institution is an important diagnostic and therapeutic tool in facilitating social change. Gosling and Turquet (6) describe a seminar designed to aid general practitioners in medicine increase their understanding

of the psychological aspects of their work that may be appropriate for a similar use with institutional representatives. The general purpose of the seminar is to provide an atmosphere where competent practitioners have the opportunity to analyze, with the help of their peers, aspects of a relationship between themselves and their patients. A similar experience, designed for institutional representatives, could facilitate exploration of the ever-changing relationships between representatives, their constituents, and state officers.

Research indicates that management can facilitate the evolution and development of boundary spanning individuals (23). A subset of technically competent staff can be selected and given the opportunity to develop contacts and broaden their exposure with other areas of the corporation through transfers, work assignments, and in-house training. Management could encourage more extensive external communication through work assignments, travel allowances, or through special education programs. Finally, promotion of boundary spanning individuals not only recognizes and rewards that activity, but also permits those individuals to develop more diverse internal and external communication networks (p. 303).

Representation is essentially a delegating process, and delegation a process of conducting affairs through representatives. In any organization representatives, whether they act on behalf of the management or the managed, need to understand the objectives and policy framework of those on whose

behalf they are acting (7). Representatives without an understanding of the objectives which set the boundaries of their role and which provide the necessary support can soon become merely messengers and lose credibility as people who represent their institution and with whom business can be done. Thus, programs or procedures that enable representatives to develop their understanding of their role in the complex interactions that are part of a modern organization are of value for both the individual and the organization.

EPILOGUE

Rice argues that difficulties arise for universities because of contradictory demands placed on them by society, including vested interests. Accordingly, these contradictions result in confused task definition and motivated disorganization. This maelstrom of university constitutions, organizations, and practices have blunted the thrust of many efforts at innovation and left their champions angry and disillusioned. Like the hiker that curses the sudden storm that leaves him wet, the action of hurling words at the weather does nothing to change the situation, alleviate the consequences, or guarantee that it won't happen again. In like manner, cries of outrage by the institution will not change the reality of the times. Colleges and universities must do what they can to prepare their people and their organizational structure to work

efficaciously with the agents of the state. Better, perhaps, that both the hiker and the institution prepare themselves to deal constructively with a constellation of forces too great to control and too powerful to ignore.

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